Every one has their favorite commercials. War posters in 1917 were much like television commercials now. Each is a form of advertisement in which they both rely on a specific emotion to get their message across. War posters had the power to communicate with people who couldn’t read, or even stuck over seas. The most effective posters were clear, legible, specific, simple, and direct. Between 1917, and 1918, approximately twenty million copies of twenty-five hundred war posters were made. Each of these propaganda posters had their own way of getting the message across. Some had similar messages, and some were very different, but by World War Two, many of them had changed.

Many World War One posters had the influence of they statue of Liberty in them. Even though the actual statue wasn’t seen, a woman would be used as a substitute. In a particular poster in 1917 by Howard Chandler Christi, this is exceptionally noticeable. There is a woman holding a flag in her right hand, which seems to be her “torch”. Behind her to the left is an army. In their faces you can see pain or agony. The government uses fear to tell the audience that they have two choices: “fight or buy liberty bonds.” The symbolism of the woman figure is clear and effective. Propaganda is used here as in many posters by insisting fear into the audience, and telling them that fighting, or buying bonds is the only way to win.

Other World War One posters have a historical icon replacing liberty. In one particular poster, liberty is wearing her robe, and holding her torch, but she has changed. It seems as if Uncle Sam has taken her place. In her left hand, she is pointing, where she should be holding her book, and she appears to have human-like skin. In this poster too, the emotion used to sell the message is fear. The poster states “You buy a liberty bond lest I perish.” The government is trying to tell the common citizen that if they do not want liberty to perish, they must buy liberty bonds. The colors in this poster are red, blue, and green. The symbol of Uncle Sam is simple, yet direct, and effective.

Other posters have interesting themes. One in particular uses the theme of a Greek Goddess to play liberty’s part. This poster is by Haskell Coffin. It has natural colors such as beige green and blue. The goddess is wearing a long white robe and has wings. She has a crown much like Liberty’s but it appears to be made of leaves. In her right hand she holds a sword and in the left a palm. The poster states: “share in the victory buy war savings stamps.” The picture captures and holds on to ones attention. Almost everything is visual and all symbols are both very clear and effective. The idea of using a Greek goddess as a symbol for the statue of liberty was direct and unique.